

[Ellen Roberts]

Form A

Circumstances of Interview No. 1

Verment

C. F. Derven

Poultney

September 6. 1938

Subject ———- Welsh- American Eisteddveds

1. Interviewed twice on same subject - August, 29, 1938 (first)

a. On September 6. 1938 (second)

b. Both interviews at 2 p. m.

2. At the home of the informant's daughter, who also took part in the interview.

3. Informants— Mrs. Ellen Roberts, and her daughter Mrs. L. O. Davis, Norten Avenue, Poultney, Vt. Mrs. Roberts lives with her daughter.

4. Mrs. Herbert Jones, Maple Street, Poultney, Vt., who is an accompanist at many Eisteddveds, advised me to interview the informants.

5. The informants live in a two-family house located on Norten Avenue in Poultney. Their section is on the south side of the building. The house is large, two and one half stories in

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height, and [is somewhat the???] painted white, although the paint is somewhat dulled by weathering. There is a large porch, leading to each section, which surrounds the/ [font?] front / of the building. Children were playing on the perch at the time of both interviews. In side, the home is well furnished; and the woodwork is varnished in natural color. The rooms are small, neatly kept, and comfortable. As in the majority of Welsh-American homes, where music is ever popular, there is a piano with a book of Welsh songs visible upon the rack.

Form B Personal History of the Informant Vermont C. F. Derven

Poultney

September 6, 1938

Subject ——— Mrs. Ellen Roberts, Norton Avenue, Poultney, Vt.

1. Welsh ancestry
2. Born in Bethel, Carnarvenshire, North Wales on November, 25, 1864.
3. Her husband, Robert W. Roberts, is deceased. She has sever-children, now adults, including Mrs. L. O. Davis, with whom she lives at present; and some children deceased.
4. She came to this country at the age of five, and has lived in Poultney since.
5. She attended school in Poultney. The building which was a school at that time is now the Masonic Temple.
6. Housewife
7. —
8. Member of the Welsh Church

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9. The informant is a woman of almost seventy four years. She is small, slightly bent by the years, and has snow white hair. Her complexion is delicate and of a soft reddish hue. She wears glasses. Her manner is quiet; and her voice is gentle and pleasant. She has a good memory, and seems to have known the life of the community in which she has lived many years. The assistance given by her daughter, who has been very active in the Welsh church and other Welsh events, was invaluable. The interviews were full of interesting material due to the co-operation of the two. The informant's daughter has one several prizes in Eisteddveds; and many members of the family have competed in them with success.

Form C Text< of Interview No. 1 (Unedited)

Vermont

C. F. Derven

Poultney

August 29, 1938

Subject ———- Welsh- American Folklore— Eisteddveds

Q. I have heard the word, 'Eisteddvod', many times, but I do not know what the word means in English. Can you tell me?

A. It means 'session', or 'sitting'.

Q. What is the earliest Eisteddved on record?

A. They had something corresponding to Eisteddveds in very early times in Wales, but the first National Eisteddved was held by Lord Rees in 1171; nearly 800 years ago. There is a National Eisteddved in Wales every year.

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Q. I have been told that music and poetry were the main subject of the Eisteddveds. Did they have folk-dances?

A. There were no dances. The Welsh people have had no folk-dances for many years, but they have always loved music and poetry. The people who came to Poultney spent most of their time on music and poetry. [They did not dance because of religious ?]

Q. Did any of the Welsh people write poetry in Welsh for the local Eisteddveds?

A. Yes. There was a man, named John William Jones, who wrote very good poetry. He was called 'John Jones Bard'. The word 'Bard' means poet in Welsh. He won many prizes with his poems. He was even known in Wales for the fine poetry he wrote.

Q. Mr. Jones is not alive, is he?

A. No. He died a number of years ago.

Q. Has any of his work been translated into English ?

A. I do not believe so. It would be very hard to translate without losing the meaning; and the sound of the language would be lost.

Informant: I have the program here for the Eisteddved on Christmas Day last year. (Hands the program to interviewer)

Q. That was a short program wasn't it?

A. Yes. It was just an evening program, mostly music. My daughter won the prize in a recitation. [It was] for adults.

Q. I notice a penmanship contest at this one. I have not seen that an other programs.

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A. They have penmanship sometimes, but not always. In the contests that last a whole day, there are more subjects.

Q. Someone told me that they award chairs at the Eisteddveds in Wales, and at some in this country.

A. Yes. They call it 'seating the bard' when they award a poet the chair. It is an old custom.

Q. Then was the first Eisteddved held in Poultney that you remember?

A. I can not recall right now when the first one was, but I remember one that was held about 43 years ago. It was at the graded school house in Poultney. That would be about 1895. There were Eisteddveds before that one that I remember, but I can not give you dates for them.

Q. Was the program the same then?

A. It was about the same. They usually have a concert before the contest begins when the festival lasts all day.

Q. How many contestants would there be in a festival like that?

A. I don't know exactly. Sometimes there are three chairs in the choral singing. Each choir has from 16 to 20 in it. That A. — would make almost 60 singers for just one event. In all there would be probably 200 contestants. I am not certain about the number though. It would be different in the smaller festivals, and in other towns.

Q. You have been to Eisteddveds in other towns?

A. Yes. I have been to Eisteddveds in Granville, N. Y. and in other towns around here. Two of my children won prizes one year in Granville. My daughter won the prize for

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recitation in Welsh and my son the prize for boys in the same contest. It was for children under a certain age.

Q. On a program that I was leaned there is a poem with the title, " Arthur bach ai ddillad newydd."

A. That is the poem that my son recited in Granville years age. It means " Little Arthur and his new clothes."

Q. There was another called, " Mi [gea?] fy monet newydd."

A. And that is the one that my daughter recited. It means, " I've got my new bonnet." These two poems are used often. I have seen them on many programs.

Q. On a 1929 program they are given for children under 10 years to recite. Was that about the age of your children then?

A. I believe it was.

Informant: I will tell you about a humorous thing that happened at one of the Eisteddveds.

A man from a nearby town who is noted for his jokes got up to recite a poem that is well-known to Welsh people. The poem is called, " Un a beethin bach tee gwecht".

(Phonetically). Here is what he said: (Phonetical) " A rollings be the thunder And a gwibblings be the mecht I remember how I squattings Un a beethin bach tee gwect. "

***** (Literal) "A rolling be the thunder And a gwibblings be the mallt I remember how I squattings Yn y bwthyn bach to gwallt. " ***** (Translation) " A rollings be the thunder And a flashing be the lightning I remember how I squattings In a little thatched-[reefed?] house."

NOTES——

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Title— " YN Y BWTHYN BACH TO GWALLT " gwibblings — the Welsh word for “flash” with an

English “ing” ending added. mallt — (mecht) [md]means "lightning".

“ squatting ” — the Welsh word in the original means " cuddled".

“ Ll”, or double “L” is pronounced like ne sound in English, or any other language the interviewer has ever heard. The sound is indicated as “ch” in the phonetical transcript used here, but that is because of the impossibility of writing it otherwise. The sound is actually made by keeping the tip of the tongue against the closed teeth. It sounds something like " skl" when the double “L” occurs at the beginning of a word; i. e., in the name " Llywelyn" (a common Welsh name). When it occurs in other positions it is pronounced were like “kl”.